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# HINTS ABOUT THE PROPER TREATMENT OF TYPHUS:

A LETTER TO AN INQUIRING FRIEND.

By C. C. SCHIEFERDECKER, M. D.

108 East 24th st., Jan. 16th, 1864.

DEAR SIR:

It seems impossible to let so many young and valuable lives sink into a premature grave, while they might certainly be saved, without protesting against that inexorable system of medical practice, which, in adhering to its old forms and obsolete theories, carries death and desolation into our families.

The observation and experience of an intelligent people tell them, how poor is the reliance upon the lancet and the drug, and medical men themselves should understand that the blind faith which was once reposed in the skill and in the honor of their learned and mysterious art, no longer exists. It is time, therefore, that this old science should be overturned within this country, and the light and the results of modern researches and discoveries let in upon its dreary colleges. It is time that its errors and prejudices were overwhelmed, and the learning and achievements of other countries erected upon their ruins.

Success is always slower than benevolent desire, as the world is partially governed by conservative instincts; and those who introduce beneficent reforms, must first move a huge load of rubbish, in the shape of ignorance, prejudice, and obstinacy, before the ground is clear, on which they can operate with effect.

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The typhus has become, within the last four to five decennies, not only more general, but also more dangerous and complicated. I am not inclined to press my conviction, that "Vaccination" is the cause of its spreading and greater danger, although analysis shows identity between the virus of pox matter and of the exudation of the inner eruption, while it is an acknowledged fact that the single forms of cutaneous eruptions stand in intimate relation with certain internal parts of the organism, viz. : *Small-pox* with the *mucous membranes of the stomach and intestinal canal*; *scarlet* with the membranes of the *back part of the mouth*; *measles* with the *respiratory organs*; *erysipelas* with the *liver*; *scarlet* with the *kidneys*, &c.\*

The object of these lines is merely to show to you, how unwarrantable the proceedings of physicians are, "who," as Johnson, Sir Chas. Scudamore, Mayo, Forbes, and a hundred other eminent physicians say, "from the mere pride of prejudice, refuse to adopt the *safe, sensible, simple, intelligible, and successful treatment* with water and proper diet. They incur a fearful responsibility, the amount of which time will certainly reveal, if not to themselves, at least to their successors. For nothing can prevent it from becoming *ultimately universal*."

Drs. Edwd. Johnson, with his sons Walter and Howard, of whom the elder, Walter, holds the appointment of Medical Tutor in the largest and wealthiest London hospital—Guy's—add; referring to Drs. Graves, Gregory, Watson, Copland, Waitz (Batavia), Mauthner, Schnitzlein, Richter, Herschel, Scouttetten, Champouillon, and others:

"All that can be expected, and all that the sensible physician ever does expect, in typhus and similar cases, from *any* treatment, is to pilot the ship through the storm, and bring it safely into harbor. And it (the water treatment) will effect this object with a degree of certainty a hundred-fold greater than any other, and the convalescence after it will be wonderfully more

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\* It is perhaps proper to mention, that the exanthem found in the lower part of the small intestines, is very much like the cow-pox, is well described by V. Pommer, Broussais, Louis, and others, and exists, according to Balling, in all cases of typhus.

rapid, while all those lasting and evil consequences which so often result, from the ordinary drug-practice, to the constitution, will be avoided."

The very eminent, learned, and practical Dr. Currie, of Liverpool, brings (long before the present development of the hydropathic system as a perfect science), in his "Medical Reports," a mass of evidence, in form of actual cases, treated by himself and others, which one would have thought could not possibly have failed to force the water-treatment into general acceptance; the more especially as Dr. Currie is a man universally acknowledged to occupy a place in the very foremost rank of his profession. Every honest medical man ought to read, among the numerous cases, detailed with great minuteness, in the Medical Reports, at least one, perhaps that communicated by Mr. Dalrymple, of Norwich. (*Vide* Currie's Medical Reports, vol. 2, page 27, second edition, 1805.)

Thos. Bateman, M. D., F. L. S., in "A Practical Synopsis of Cutaneous Diseases," remarks: "After the extensive evidence which a period of more than twenty years has furnished in proof of the uniform efficacy and security of the external use of cold water, in scarlatina, and in other febrile diseases, connected with high morbid heat of the skin, it is to be lamented that *some practitioners still look upon the practice as an experiment; and repeat the remnants of exploded hypotheses*, about repelling morbid matter, stopping pores, etc., as reasons for resisting the testimony of some of the greatest ornaments of the medical profession. For my own part, I have been in the constant habit of resorting to the practice, at every opportunity, in scarlatina, (and in typhoid fevers, during my superintendence of the fever institution for the last ten years), attending to the simple rules laid down by Dr. Currie; and I have *never* witnessed any inconvenience, much less any injury from it; *but an uniformity in its beneficial operation, of which no other physical expellent, with which I am acquainted, affords an example.*"

Sundelin, Von Siebold, Balling, Most, and a host of other most eminent physicians, highly recommend water in typhus. Dr. O. E. Bock (the celebrated Professor of Pathological Anatomy in Leipzig), in his "Diagnostic," &c., declares all

**Specifics and Medications in Typhus**, as "*unphysiologically*" objectionable; and adds, "that all rational treatment of the typhus, as of all other dyscrasias, must have in view, *to support properly the metamorphosis of the blood, and to remove troublesome symptoms*. Experience teaches, that, with proper dietetics, far more typhus patients are restored, and quicker strengthened, than with drug-medication and stimulation. But a proper dietetic treatment consists *in giving a mild, mostly fluid food*, (alternating between milk, butter-milk, bread, egg-drink, meat broth), *in keeping the air day and night fresh and pure; in most scrupulous cleanliness of clothes, bed and person* (washing and baths); *in preventing all excitement of body, senses and mind; in proper attention to the excretions*, particularly of the catanpous activity by baths, urine by cathetre, and stool by enemata. Against violent headache, apply cold wet compresses to the head. Excessive bleedings remove rather by cold applications, than by lead, alum and acids; the intestinal bleeding by cold injections, and cold compresses to the abdomen; great sensitiveness and swelling of abdomen removed by warm fomentations; keep the body from getting sore by a good bed and cold washings; the dryness and covering of lips and mouth can easily be corrected by keeping these parts clean and moist with water."

Dr. H. E. Richter (Professor, &c., in Dresden), after giving his views on prophylactics (here so much neglected, as if, to say the least, unknown), remarks: "We have in vain hunted for a *specificum* in typhus. We are bound to a dietetic treatment. Fluids only can be given; wine and eggs in cases of extreme exhaustion. Room well aired and cool; windows open day and night, and some fire. Cleanliness in every respect. Wash body often, or bath, or pour pure water over it. By dry skin pack in wet sheet. Wash forehead, face, arms and legs with vinegar, as such packs of vinegar are beneficial, derivative, quieting and sudorific. All excitement to be avoided." "The internal and external use of *cold water* is not only cooling, refreshing, antifebrile and energetically contracting, but is also a most important skin-irritant, derivative and crisis-promoting means, and gives us in typhus now, since the development of the water cure as a scientific system, a far more extensive applicability than be-

fare. We have now systematically circumscribed : Cold immersions, cold affusions (particularly on the head in stupor); packing of naked body in wet-sheets (particularly in dry heat of the body); local baths of many kinds; half baths of different temperature; cooling or warming cold water-compresses (particularly ice-cold ones on the abdomen in meteorismus); tepid or cold local or general washings, &c."

The "Encyclopædic Dictionary of the Medical Sciences," edited by the Professors of the Medical Faculty in Berlin (viz. : C. F. v. Graefe, Hufeland, Link, Rudolphi, Von Siebold, Bush, Horn, Ossan, Hecker, Müller, Jüngken, and other authoritative giants of the Medical Profession), says, in vol. 34, under the head of Typhus : "According to our insufficient knowledge of the nature of the typhus, the following is left for us to do :

"1. *Restriction of the typhus-process*, by cold, pure air, cleansing of the skin. The typhus of 1813 has shown this to the utmost extent. Cold rooms, light covering, cold drink, cold washings and baths are the principal means for the extraction of the heat so much roused by this disease. Cold drinks, cold washings, cold douches and affusions had the best effect. Those whose heads had become freer, desired to remain in the cold room, asked for cold drink and cold head-compresses. Coldness helps to cure, and to diminish the contagion. This proceeding is proper as long as dry heat, stupor, delirium, &c., exist. When the heat is diminished, and the skin becomes soft, we have to moderate the first treatment, and pass to a more moderate temperature, but with the greatest caution."

The author of this article says, verbatim : "Experience has taught us this antidote [cold water, pure air, and cleaning of the skin]. I have learned this during the typhus epidemic, in 1813, and ever since successfully applied."

"Cold drinks, light covering, cold rooms, cold baths and washings, cold douche-baths, cold affusions, suited best. Patients returned to consciousness, declared themselves content with them. The great heat, the redness of the face and of the eyes, the stupor, were readily diminished; quiet and a feeling of comfort were established."

"*Skin and hair* seem to discharge the poison, and transfer it



to those who are susceptible for it—this is, then, a most urging motive to continue the washings, and apply coldness wherever we can. This is very important for the prophylaxis, the exhibition of cold, even in a very great degree, having the advantage of destroying the typhus-poison in bed, clothes, and wash. *Coldness helps to heal and to protect, to diminish the contagion.*"

"2d. *Limitation of the congestion of the blood to the head, chest, and abdomen. Prevention of inflammation.* Warm rooms, warm covering, warm drinks, and stimulating means, cause these congestions, and are injurious. External cold applications, washing, and cold compresses, are here also the best remedies. To prevent congestions to head and brain, the means are ice-cold fomentations, cold washings, affusions with cold water and cold douch-baths, partly in dry bathing-tubs, partly in tepid half-baths. Of all agents, these are the best, most powerful and *indispensable*. It is proper to continue, energetically, these extractions of warmth and diminutions of blood-congestions, till the sopor, delirium, dry-heat, &c., are removed. The head-compresses must be renewed when ceasing to be cold. Another cold compress is to be applied to the back and neck, but they must not be too heavy. The washings with ice-cold water are to be made with a sponge, and continued as long as the skin is hot and dry. The addition of vinegar, chloride of lime, or wine, is not essential, for very cold water is sufficient. The cold affusions of the patient, while in a tepid half-bath, daily two or three times repeated, for four to five days, are *invaluable*. The majority of those who suffered from severe typhus, have been successfully treated with these cold agents, and few only were restored without them." The writer then mentions: "That in certain cases more moderate temperatures of the water were used; but in most cases of typhus, with severe affections of the head, *tepid water is too feeble an agent*. Baths are needed for the after-cure to support the convalescence, and to strengthen the organism. This continuation of the use of baths is particularly necessary in hospitals, to exterminate the contagion. It is to be recommended as *prophylactic* and as a *sanitary duty*. There are only few cases where bleeding is not injurious. *Cathartics* and *cooling drugs* are only relatively useful, but mostly inju-

rious. We must care for a daily evacuation. *Vomitives* are of no value, and do often harm. *Calomel* has been recommended and condemned. *Acids* are pleasant, but do not influence a cure. As to *Chlor* (*acidum muriaticum oxygenatum*) its effect is overrated; and cleanliness, water, fresh air, are much more important and necessary, than the mass of fumigations so apt to cause cough, oppression, and pain.

For curiosity's sake, I will here add the instructions of the alopathic master, given in this article: "Cold baths and affusions with cold water in dry bathing tub *must* be used in great torpor, continued typhomania, dry hot skin, predominating cerebral affections, &c., in the first and second stage, before the crisis appears. Here are violent shocks necessary, by pouring ice-cold water in a slow stream, or from a bucket, in three to four portions, with one dash over head, back and abdomen, to be continued till reaction ensues—viz.: struggles, exclamations, complaints, desires to desist, therefore—6, 8, 10, 15 buckets of cold water, one after another. These affusions are daily twice or thrice repeated, and for 6, 7, 8 days continued; till the characteristic symptoms of the typhus have decidedly diminished, full consciousness returned, the patient complains and resists, the eye free, and the enormous heat and dryness of the skin removed." "We interrupt the treatment for a day, but begin it again when the improvement does not last, &c."

3d. *Limitation of such symptoms*, which by their continuation become dangerous, and prevent the crisis, viz.: Bleedings, diarrhoea, cramps, pains, gangrene, &c. *Bleeding* (if not a critical symptom), treated with ice-cold compresses and injections, cold affusions, and douches. *Metrorrhagia*, cold fomentations, injections, affusions on abdomen and sexual organs with cold water, &c.

"Mortification of one or the other member of the body, appeared mostly with the poor and unclean, who did not enjoy the advantage of cold baths and proper attention."

4th. *Promotion of the crisis*, prevention of after diseases and new infections. Baths, baths, baths! Fresh air and proper diet.

"*Prevention of after-diseases, or relapses.*—An apparent restoration shall not deceive the physician. A too early interruption of the proper treatment, too early cessation of the cold application, of the care for cool and pure air, for proper, clean covering, for daily exertion; or mental excitement, visits, and particularly the too early use of *too strong food*, are the causes of such troubles."

Regarding the food of the patient it is said :\*

"*Far better is the entire exclusion of wine than its abuse.*—The food should be throughout easily digestible, light and fluid; repeatedly given, little at a time—every three hours about. Meat-broth is particularly indicated in small doses: it does not molest mechanically, does not fill the stomach up, is easily digested, disturbs not the sleep, and replaces best and quickest the great loss sustained."

"During the convalescence continued baths are necessary. Very frequently, in 1813 and 1814, has the war-pest been carried about into dwellings, villages and cities, where it never would have appeared, if the purifying baths had been long enough continued in the convalescence."

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\* I cannot permit this opportunity to pass away without touching a point which physicians in this country seem entirely to ignore; it is this fact: *That only what we really digest, gives us real and reliable strength, but not what we merely swallow*, no matter how much nutritious substance the latter may contain. Nobody will deny that in all violent, acute diseased conditions the stomach suffers pre-eminently, and that consequently its digestive powers are greatly reduced; but the more concentrated food is, the more strength of the primary digestive apparatus is required for its proper transfer-preparation. It seems *prima facie* unreasonable to ask from an exhausted stomach to digest what would trouble the stomach of an ostrich. In the laudable anxiety to sustain an exhausted system, this very exhaustion is forgotten, and the amount of nutritious matter in a most concentrated form is considered, while the immense amount of digestive power, necessary but not existing, is overlooked. Startled by this want of power, stimulants and irritants are mixed with the concentrated food, and the last remnant of vital energy roused to accomplish a work which becomes impossible by the repeated attempt and consequent entire exhaustion. Thus, an egg, which a great dietetician calls "*a chicken with feathers and bones*," is mixed with brandy

These rather heroic recommendations are not made by any follower of the scientifically established water-cure system; they come from the heads of the Allopathic drug-profession, which scowls at hydropathy in this country; the American Allopathist, rather than do honor to his own masters, kills by drug and dietetic abuse, his victims, or lets them die without applying the means proved and recommended as successful by his teachers. "But what would I do in case of Typhus?" I answer by describing the treatment of Dr. C. A. W. Richter, Berlin, whose work on Typhus has been honored by receiving the prize from the Medical Faculty of Berlin in 1848. He says:

"A timely and proper exhibition of cold water will frequently prevent the breaking out of the disease, particularly when it is spreading by contagion. If an individual, exposed to the danger of infection, shows by the fact of being easily fatigued, and by head-aches, vertigo, &c., the signs of being infected, we must proceed thus :

"The patient is entirely undressed and put into a dry bathing-tub or on the bare floor; five to six pails of cold water are then, with moderate pressure, from a height of two to three feet poured over head, neck and shoulders. This procedure is repeated after five to six hours—and four to five such affusions are generally sufficient to remove all impending danger."

But when the disease is broken out, we cannot stay its progress by this treatment: it runs its course.

*Treatment of the disease itself* :—The patient is, at the time of exacerbation, towards evening, packed in a cold wet sheet, in which he remains till he is slightly warm; he then enters a half bath of 68° F., and stays while moderately rubbed, four to six

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and sugar, &c., and hands are gleefully rubbed at the prospective effect—and disappointment follows—more is added, and death ensues. If it were true, that the most concentrated food strengthens most, why is it that the food and drink of a prize-fighter in training is the most simple? Should that which would sicken and weaken a giant in strength, strengthen a weak man, an exhausted patient? A famished being, is it filled at once with the strongest food?

minutes. When dried he receives a wet bandage on the abdomen, his legs are bandaged, and the head is surrounded by a cooling wet compress, to be renewed when getting warm. In the first days, when the bowels are generally constipated, we procure every twenty-four hours a passage by a large injection. Besides this, we give daily two small cold injections, which influence advantageously the afterwards following diarrhœa. The patient is again packed in the morning, bathed and bandaged as above; the proceeding is repeated in the evening. If on the sixth and seventh day diarrhœa supervenes, we give in the day, between the two packs, a sitz-bath of 65° F. for ten to fifteen minutes, and envelope the patient after it up to under the arms with a thick woolen blanket. About the ninth or tenth day, or earlier, if before this indication of spontaneous perspirations should appear, we let the patient, by degrees, remain longer in the wet pack, till his face gets slightly red and the temporal pulsation quicker; we then bring him quickly into a bath of 68° F., and have him, for three to five minutes from a moderate height, affused from the mouth of a large and repeatedly filled watering-pot, or from a shower-bath. He sleeps, when brought to bed, generally very soon after this bath, and begins to perspire. This perspiration should be supported for three to four hours by drinking from time to time a small swallow of fresh water; if the sweat spontaneously ceases to flow, we quickly moisten the body with a wet cloth on head, chest, extremities, and cover it again quickly and carefully with the bed covering; the perspiration then generally begins again to flow. Finally, when he ceases to perspire, we bring him into a bath of 75° F., and then into the bed, when he will again sleep and perspire.

“When the patient awakes from this sleep, he feels like another being, and makes the impression of his change upon those who surround him; his head is free, he can control his members, and all apathy has passed. His friends perceive the clear, lively expression of his eyes and of his features. Patient is now only packed and bathed in the morning, in the evening he is merely washed off, but he continues to wear the abdominal bandage, which is renewed several times during the day.”

With this method of treating the Typhus, which, since the publication of his “*crowned*” work on this disease, has been introduced into the hospital and private practice of physicians,

Dr. Richter had restored some 90 typhus patients, among whom were some nearly "in agony," and given up by other physicians.

I myself have had a number of cases which I cured in a similar manner.

These are the effects of the treatment with cold water, and its beneficial results are ranked in Europe as among the most glorious discoveries of the age in the medical science.

To one, cognizant of the truth, it seems surpassingly strange that in this brilliant century, and among men of ability and culture, many of whom have drunk at the fountains of European wisdom, that the use of water in the elimination of disease, and especially in the easy conquest of the most violent fevers, should be so utterly unknown or ignored.

The surgery of America is everywhere recognized as of very high excellence, and students of this branch of human attainments from over the ocean might well seek in our halls of surgical greatness for noble and brilliant guides in their profession. But it is unfortunately only too true, that an equal skill and an equal advancement do not characterize our medical practitioners—they drag heavily behind their trans-Atlantic compeers; it can only be hoped, that the day is not far distant, when the dangerous errors that now stand clad in the dark robes of death in their midst, will be expelled from their books, and right knowledge dawn into their practice.

Very truly,

DR. C. C. SCHIEFERDECKER.

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